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ABSTRACT

The discourse of Mexican-American preschoolers during sociodramatic play was investigated to learn what the children knew about the social world and how this knowledge was organized in their speech. The theoretical framework for the study was derived from two sources: the psychological construct of the script and the sociolinguistic view of play as social construction. Social play was defined as a state of engagement in which the successive, nonliteral behaviors of one partner are contingent on the nonliteral behaviors of the other partner. Six focal children selected to participate in the study were arranged in two triads of varied membership. Children were asked to play in the housekeeping area of a classroom and to pretend that the researcher was not present. Observations of 8 hours of play were recorded on videotape. Because plans and scripts were seldom found in the data, preliminary analysis of a portion of the transcribed tapes focused on negotiations and enactments in play behavior. Findings were considered in terms of the extent to which children represented scripts in their play, the relationship between code-switching and script enactment, the nature of children's enactments, and the incidence of successful enactments. (RH)

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# ROLE INITIATION IN THE DISCOURSE OF MEXICAN-AMERICAN CHILDREN'S PLAY

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PRELIMINARY VERSION - PLEASE DO NOT QUOTE WITHOUT PERMISSION

# INTRODUCTION

This was an investigation of the discourse of Mexican-American preschoolers during sociodramatic play, fantasy play in which children assign roles to be played. The broad purpose was to see what these children know about the social world and how this knowledge is organized in their speech. The theoretical framework for the study was derived from two sources: the psychological construct of the script (Schank & Abelson, 1977) and the sociolinguistic view of play as social construction.

A script is a cognitive structure that is a sequenced description of events in a given context. A person has scripts for everyday routines, such as having dinner or eating in a restaurant. They are essentially stereotyped sequences of actions and, therefore, subject to little change. According to Schank and Abelson, scripts are stored in long-term memory and are evidence that the organization of memory is episodic, based on personal experiences or episodes, and not hierarchical, or based on abstract semantic categories.

Scripts are of interest in the study of sociodramatic play since children seem to be enacting them while playing. Because children often role-play sequences of activities that take place at home (e.g., putting a baby to bed) or other familiar places (e.g., the doctor's office), scripts may be the units of organization of children's social knowledge. However, because they are elementary units that represent stereotyped events, they are not directly useful for explaining inventions as dramatic play might be, or problem-solving behavior.

According to Schank and Abelson, plans are; these are explanations of sequences of actions that are intended to achieve a goal. Schank and

Abelson's interest in plans lies in the way people understand, rather than produce or construct, them. For purposes of studying children's play, then, conceptions of scripts and plans that consider how children construct them are useful. Sutton-Smith and Heath (1981) discussed two contrasting paradigms of play, one of which emphasizes communication. The other is associated with psychological approaches to pretense or fantasy play, primarily investigated as an intraindividual phenomenon. Play in this sense is instrumental in developing a sense of mastery and creativity in young children. This cognitive orientation represents the "literacy" paradigm, according to Sutton-Smith and Heath. What is often studied is the child's ability to symbolize, and literacy ultimately depends on the ability to deal with symbols that are removed from familiar social contexts. The social aspects of play are emphasized by sociolinguists and anthropologists who study play as a kind of communication or oral performance. Some black children, for example, are socialized to use language playfully and publicly so that their discourse resembles chants or tall tales. This kind of performance grows out of interaction and group participation, specific to certain cultural subgroups.

The perspective of the present study is based on a conception of play as a social activity; the appropriate paradigm lies somewhere between the literacy and performance models. Dramatic play is studied neither for its strictly cognitive nor performance aspects, but as discourse that is jointly constructed by two or more children. The definition of social play proposed by Garvey (1974, 1977) has proved most useful for my analysis. According to Garvey, social play is "a state of engagement in which the successive, nonliteral behaviors of one partner are contingent on the nonliteral

behaviors of the other partner" (1974:163). In order to engage in social play, children must possess the ability to:

1) Distinguish between reality and play
2) Abstract rules for structuring play
3) Cooperatively construct, or share a common image of, a theme in play.

Each of these abilities will be explained briefly since they are relevant to the present analysis. The first ability to distinguish between reality and play is often observable through children's language. Children change pitch, loudness, or rate of speech when they switch to an imaginary register, or they mark play and nonplay states verbally, for example, by saying, "Pretend like you're the sister," or, "It's hot, for real." The use of props such as costumes or toys, also helps the investigator identify the child's marking of play.

The second ability, the abstraction of rules, is more difficult to analyze. Rules of language use generally do not enable us to predict what a speaker will say next, but a knowledge of them allows speakers to recognize violations of use when they occur. Garvey points out that there are at least two levels of rules to consider, general and specific or local. General rules, such as turn-taking, should be evident in any interaction. Specific or local rules apply, in this case, to play situations. Children expect each other to maintain role identities throughout an interaction; they also apply rules about acceptable features of players' roles, e.g., "Don't laugh. Doctors do not laugh."

Third, the construction and elaboration of a jointly held image depends on children's sharing responsibility for thematic development. This third

ability or set of abilities is of greatest interest in this study. The first two abilities underlie it, but the focus of analysis will be the collaborative construction of discourse in play. Garvey suggests that what motivates children to engage in social play is the opportunity for participants to control and manipulate aspects of their environment, both animate and inanimate.

This view of play, as jointly constructed and affording control, links the language of play to children's use of language in general. Cook-Gumperz (1981) proposes a general conception of children's talk that is compatible with Garvey's. According to Cook-Gumperz, children use talk primarily as a tool for influencing other's behavior. The referential use of language, including the exchange of information per se, is not primary. Speech is, instead, a social resource, a means of asserting one's own importance and controlling self and others. Recent empirical work from a sociolinguistic perspective (Cook-Gumperz, 1981; Ervin-Tripp, 1982) corroborates this view as does the present study.

In this study, the enactment and verbal elaboration of children's scripts were investigated in Mexican-American preschoolers. It was expected that some of the subjects would be Spanish speakers and others, bilingual in Spanish and English. The following general questions were posed:

1) To what extent do the children instantiate or activate scripts in their play?

2) What is the nature of the scripts?
   a) Content or themes
   b) Structure: How do the children initiate, construct, or elaborate upon the scripts verbally?

3) What is the relationship between language alternation (code-switching) and the enactment of scripts?

## METHOD

The study was carried out in Brownsville, Texas, a city with a population of about 100,000, near the Mexican border, where I spent two months. The first was spent locating an appropriate school or center, familiarizing myself with the staff, children, and routines of the day care center chosen, and specifying data collection procedures. The second month was spent recording videotaped data and interviewing the children studied. The data presented here are drawn from the videotapes of children's dramatic play.

### Site

I chose Brownsville as the research site since, as a city in the Rio Grande Valley near Mexico, its population is largely bilingual (Spanish-English), as well as bicultural. The assumption was made that children would use both Spanish and English in their play and that the play would reflect aspects of Mexican-American culture.

Given these features of Brownsville, I set out to locate an appropriate preschool or day care center where children used Spanish and English and where dramatic play was typically scheduled. I had solicited suggestions for centers from colleagues, acquaintances of colleagues, and professionals in Brownsville, e.g., a pediatrician who worked with personnel in day care. These informants tended to refer me to schools and centers that were known to be "educational"; they stressed academic preparation, including learning English quickly, even at the preschool level. Emphasis on English and academics worked against the features of interest for this study: opportunities to use both languages and to engage in dramatic play. The site chosen was, therefore, distinct from most of the private day care centers I visited,

where most of each morning was devoted to prereading and math readiness lessons.

The Head Start Regional Training Officer for South Texas suggested contacting the County Head Start Director in Brownsville, who in turn arranged for a tour with the Social Services Coordinator of the four Head Start centers in the city. I chose one of these centers, which the Director had recommended for its "cooperative" staff. (Interestingly, the head teacher there seemed to be the most fluent English speaker at all four centers.) This center had an enrollment of 55 3- to 5-year-old children, most of whom lived in a public housing project near the center. There were three teachers, including the head teacher, and three aides. The only male was the teacher of the 3-year-old group. The parents of the children in attendance met federal guidelines for low-income families eligible for Head Start. The daily schedule also conformed to Head Start regulations. Activities included the following: breakfast, large group work period (flannel board, etc.), music, seat work with manipulatives, lunch, nap time, snack, art, free play, and outdoor activity.

Subjects

Although children were able to engage in dramatic play on some days, it was not a daily event. I, therefore, decided to select a number of focal children, who engaged willingly and often in play and who were relatively talkative players, and to observe them outside of the regular classroom. Although the situation was not naturalistic, it enabled me to gather a considerable corpus unaffected by the general classroom noise. Teachers suggested a list of children, and I chose six of these, five girls and one boy. Three children came from intact families, and three had mothers who were single

parents. One mother was employed; one father worked in an unskilled job, whereas another was skilled; the third father was disabled.

The six children were arranged in two triads, partly because of their language abilities. Conversations in both Spanish and English were desired. Group I, all members of Ms. Rios'* class, consisted of Adelita (5 yr.;5 mo. at time of data collection), Diana (5;4), and Mari (5;2). All three spoke Spanish almost exclusively although they seemed to understand some English and Adelita and Diana were just beginning to speak it. Group II, members of Ms. DeLuna's class, were Carlota (5;4), Evita (4;11), and Beto (5;5). Evita was English dominant but usually spoke to Carlota, a Spanish dominant, in Spanish. Beto was essentially monolingual in English although he understood Spanish and on occasion produced Spanish utterances for Carlota's benefit. Most of Group II's conversations, however, were in English.

Data Collection

Two weeks of the first month of data collection had been spent locating a site. The following two weeks were spent familiarizing myself with the center and specifying the procedures for videotaping. As mentioned earlier, six focal children were selected partly because of their linguistic abilities. I chose to observe them in triads after a week of experimentation with groups made up of from two to six children. Dyads appeared to be self-conscious and talked little whereas four to six children often divided themselves into subgroups. For ease of analysis, I chose triads that produced moderate amounts of talk but usually maintained one conversation or play theme at a time. During the last two weeks of videotaping, I varied the membership

*Pseudonyms are used.

of both triads. I wanted to observe possible code-switching that might be done for the benefit of new members and possible variations in script enactment and elaboration. From one to three members of Groups I and II, then, were present for the remaining sessions.

Play was videotaped in the smallest of the center classrooms. It had a clearly designated area for dramatic play, labelled "housekeeping." There were child-sized furniture, including kitchen cabinets, a stove, dresser, mirror, dolls, a miniature shopping cart, cooking utensils, etc. During the three weeks of videotaping, I varied the props available to the children to see if I could encourage particular themes.

By the time videotaping began, all children were accustomed to my presence. Because I often talked to the teachers and had served as a "teacher" on occasion (e.g., when children took a trip to the zoo), some children called me <u>teacher</u>. Others called me <u>Celia</u>, using Spanish phonology, which indicated my non-authoritative status. Children did not call the center teachers by their first names. Going out of the regular classroom and into the small room to be videotaped was special, and children seemed to view it as a time of relative freedom. They initially tended to play with what was available anywhere in the room.

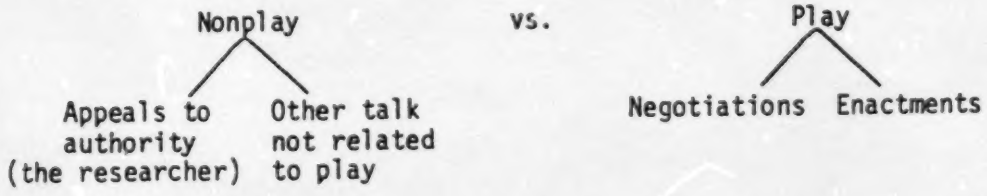
Instructions were given to Group I in Spanish and to Group II in English. I asked them to play in the housekeeping corner only and to pretend that I wasn't there. This was clearly hard for them to do, and I was occasionally called upon to settle disputes or grant permission. Although the camera and equipment were placed as far away from the children as possible, they sometimes glanced at it. Play behaviors, however, generally resembled those I had observed in the regular classroom.

Equipment consisted of a Panasonic VHS Porta Pak. Two-hour color videotape cassettes were used. In addition audiotaped recordings, producing better sound than the videotapes, were made on a Sony TC-142 recorder with a unidirectional microphone attached. The microphone was set on a window sill near the housekeeping corner. A total of about 8 hours of play were recorded.

Data Analysis

The preliminary analysis presented here is based on talk from two hours of videotaped recordings, consisting of four taping sessions, three with Group I and one with two members of Group I and a child from their day care center classroom. These sessions were selected because my impression after videotaping was that the play of these children was more coherent and sustained than that of Group II. Group II was videotaped in the afternoon when interruptions of play were frequent because of parents' picking up children in the group at varying times.

Videotapes were transcribed by a graduate assistant, bilingual in English and Spanish, who was raised in Brownsville. The transcription format included speakers, addressees, the verbatim transcript, an English translation, and a description of some of the nonverbal activity. Talk was segmented according to turns, which were numbered on the transcript. After the transcripts were completed, I viewed the tapes with the transcripts in hand in order to see how best to segment and analyze several kinds of discourse that could be categorized as follows:



The play-related talk was the focus of analysis, so that I next attempted to separate negotiations, talk about who will play what role, from enactments, role-played dialogue or sequences of talk in which children play or enact their roles. I use the terms negotiation and enactment in contrast to plan and script, respectively, in Schank and Abelson's sense (1977), because such plans and scripts were seldom found in the data. This finding is discussed in the next section. Enactments were initiated by means of two general contrasting strategies. These are "play by regulation," in which children talk about the roles they will play before enactment, and "start playing," in which children skip a planning or negotiation phase and immediately begin enactment.

Because negotiation sometimes led to enactment and sometimes didn't and could occur sporadically during enactment, separating negotiations from eanctments was not informative. The more revealing distinction was one between successful and unsuccessful initiating strategies. A successful strategy was defined as the first turn in at least four consecutive turns of play, involving two speakers and a single play topic or activity. The first speaker was the initiator, who wished to start a new direction or play theme. It was assumed that the fourth turn reflected cooperation or acquiescence on the part of the second speaker. An unsuccessful strategy led to fewer than four consecutive turns and, hence, lack of cooperation from the other children.

Although the categories for analysis seem to adequately describe these data, they have not been applied by other investigators. A series of reliability checks will be done in the future to test the usefulness and adequacy of the categories for these data and for the data from Group II.

## RESULTS

Results will be presented according to the research questions posed. The first was, to what extent do the children instantiate or activate scripts in their play? Following Schank and Abelson's definition of a script as a stereotyped sequence of events, I found that there were few scripts enacted. Temporal sequencing is important so that the enactment of a mealtime script might be: 1) set the table; 2) tell family members to sit down; 3) serve the food; 4) eat; 5) clear the table. Clear evidence of temporal sequences that indicated a routine series of events in a single enactment was sparse. There were only 14 such examples in the four sessions. These included the following scripts: playing doctor, eating in a restaurant, going shopping, and picking a child up from school. Some of these scripts were enacted more than once, so that there were fewer than 14 different scripts. The answer to the first question, then, is that children seldom instantiated scripts.

The third question was, what is the relationship between language alternation (code-switching) and the enactment of scripts? This could not be answered with the data under analysis because these three focal children spoke Spanish almost exclusively. The data from Group II will be used as a basis for addressing this question.

The second question, what is the nature (content and structure) of the scripts, was modified. Since there were few scripts in Schank and Abelson's sense, I looked for ways of characterizing and analyzing what children did enact, and the question became, what is the nature of the children's enactments? The content of most of these enactments was unsurprising in light of the setting, which was a conventionally stocked housekeeping corner.

In addition to the scripts named earlier, children enacted the following themes: mopping and sweeping, feeding grandmother, mothering, going to a party, talking on the phone, eating at home, baking a cake, delivering a present, dancing, and speaking English. Of these delivering a present, dancing, and speaking English occurred least often; other themes were recurrent.

As for the structure of the enactments, children initiated, constructed and elaborated them in a variety of ways. The present analysis focuses on the way children initiated them. To do this I looked for instances when children tried to enact a role, either at the beginning of a taping session, or later in attempts to redirect the play by reassigning roles or changing the activity (e.g., from baking a cake to getting ready for school). During the four sessions, there were 95 instances of negotiations (attempts to enact) and enactments. More than half (52) of these 95 were initiated by one child, Mari. Diana initiated 26 during the three sessions she participated in, and Adelita, 15 during four sessions. Lili, a friend of Mari and Adelita's but not a member of Group I, substituted for Diana one day and initiated only two enactments.

The next question to be answered was, how many of these initiations were successful, i.e., how many were sustained for at least four turns of speaking? Well over half (56/95) were successful. In terms of individual children Mari again had the highest number (27), but the lowest percentage of success (52%). Diana was successful 61% (16/26) of the time, and Adelita, 73% (11/15). Lili made two attempts at enactment, and both succeeded. (See Table 1 for a summary of results.)

As to type of strategy for initiating enactments, neither the first,

"start playing," nor the second, "play by regulation," seemed to be favored by the children. The first strategy was employed 50 times whereas the second was used 45 times. Mari and Diana were both notably more successful when they simply started playing. Mari was successful 18 times (vs. 10 unsuccessful negotiations); Diana was successful nine times (vs. three unsuccessful negotiations). Adelita was successful six out of nine times, using the first strategy, and five out of six times, using the second. (See Table 2 for a summary of results, with respect to the two strategies.)

Although the number of negotiations and enactments was not great, there were enough to give a sense of individual styles of playing and, more generally, of interacting, at least within the focal triad. The following examples are intended to illustrate the contrasts between successful vs. unsuccessful negotiations and enactments, "start playing" vs. "play by regulation" strategies, and among individuals' styles of play:

A = Adelita
M = Mari

EXAMPLE 1: Unsuccessful strategy, "play by regulation" at 7, followed by unsuccessful strategy, "start playing" at 8:

| Speaker/Addressee | Transcription and translation | Commentary |
|---|---|---|
| A to M | 7. Y yo ero la doctora.<br>La cami..cómo se pone?<br>(I'm the doctor. The shir...how do you put it on?) | 7. Attempting to figure how to put the apron on. |
| M to A | 8. ¿Mi hija? (Daughter?) | 8. M "makes" A her daughter by calling her "my daughter." |
| A to M | 9. ¿Qué? (What?) | 9. A seems to acquiesce, but only for this turn. |
| M to A | 10. ¿Me compras...? (Will you buy me...?) | 10. M is interrupted by D, who ends this brief interaction between M and A. |

There were many examples of this type at the beginning of the first taping session. In fact, 13 minutes of interaction elapsed before a successful enactment occurred. The next two examples are both "successful," according to my definition, but example 3 is more successful than example 2:

EXAMPLE 2: Unsuccessful strategy, "play by regulation," followed at 253 by successful strategy, "play by regulation":

A = Adelita
D = Diana
M = Mari

| Speaker/ Addressee | | Transcription and translation | | Commentary |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| D to A, M | 249. | No, yo soy el doctor. (No, I'm the doctor.) Ding, dong! Ding dong! Ding dong! Ding dong! | 249. | Rejects M's suggestion that D be daughter. D stands off to side of corner, as if at door. While saying, "Ding dong," moves to block area to get paper, to be her book or pad, perhaps. M moves toward D, stopping in kitchen along way. |
| M - D | 250. | Eh, qué. . . ¿Qué pasó, hija? (Hey, what. . . What happened, daughter?) | 250. | Said with authority; M moves hips as if for emphasis. Puts hands on hips. |
| D - M | 251. | No, no soy hija, ni nada. (No, I'm not a daughter, or anything.) | 251. | Said firmly and loudly. |
| M - D | 252. | ¿Qué pasó, hija? (What happened, daughter?) | 252. | Said with equal firmness and amplitude. |
| D - M | 253. | No, yo no soy. . . Yo no soy hija. . . Yo no te conozco. No más que tú me llamas, OK? (No, I'm not--I don't--I don't know you. You just call me, OK?) | 253. | Said less loudly, without determination. |
| M - D | 254. | ¿Quién es? (Who is it?) | 254. | Looks reluctant and almost walks away, but complies. |
| D - M | 255. | Vd. me llamó, ¿verdad? (You called me, is that right?) | 255. | Articulated very clearly; is now in the role of doctor. |
| M - D | 256. | Sí. (Yes) | 256. | A walks over to M at this point. She has been playing daughter. |
| D - M | 257. | Entonces, ¿por qué me llamó? (Then, why did you call me?) | 257. | |
| M - D | 258. | No, es que quería, que, que mañana viniera a cuidarme la niña porque voy al mandado. (No, it's that, that, that I wanted you to come tomorrow to take care of the baby because I'm going to the market.) | 258. | Said rather softly and in a nasal manner. She is changing their roles. |
| D - M | 259. | No! Yo no cuido nada. (I'm not taking care of anything.) | 259. | D refuses to cooperate and walks away as if displeased. |

EXAMPLE 3: Successful strategy, "start playing":

A = Adelita
D = Diana
M = Mari

| Speaker/ Addressee | Transcription and translation | Commentary |
|---|---|---|
| D - M, A | 263. Ding dong! Ding dong!<br>Ding dong! Ding dong! | 263. M and A first talk softly behind cabinet door.<br>M moves toward kitchen area. |
| D - M | 264. Yo era--tú abrías la puerta, donde estaba.<br>Ding dong.<br>(I was--you were opening the door, where I was.) | 264. D moves to other side of room, away from her "door."<br>M moves toward D. |
| D - M | 265. No, ésa no es. Allá donde está el papel y ( ). Ding dong.<br>(No, not there. Where the paper is and ( ).<br><br>Mira. Ahora venía el doctor.<br>(Look. Now the doctor's come.)<br>Mira (?) Ding dong! Ding dong! Ding dong! | 265. D tells M to go to the door, where she has left the paper.<br><br>D moves to door.<br><br>M moves with paper to A, who is next to the cabinet and on a bed. |
| M - D | 266. Qué--<br>Qué quería Vd.? (What did you want?) | 266. M is back at door with D. |
| D - M | 267. Vd. me llamó porque--verdad que Vd. me llamó?<br>(You called me because. Isn't it true that you called me?) | |
| M - D | 268. Uh huh. Oiga. Oiga, qué es-- ( )<br>(Listen. Listen, what is--) | |
| D - M | 269. Ah, que Vd. me llamó, Srta. Para que le atendiera a su hija.<br>¿Y dónde está?<br>(Ah, you called me, Miss, so that I could check on your daughter.<br>And where is she?) | |
| M - D | 270. Allí está en el cuarto.<br>(There in the room.) | 270. Takes doll from A ("baby"). |
| M - A | 271. Mire. A ver, quítate--Le va a dar un beso. Es que si le da un beso, luego no va estar mala.<br>(Look. Let's see, take off--Are you giving her a kiss. If you give her a kiss, then she won't be sick anymore.) | 271. They walk over to A in bed. |

EXAMPLE 3: (cont.)

| | Transcription and translation | Commentary |
|---|---|---|
| D - M | 272. OK, ahorita. ¡Bien mala! Sí, es. Sí es. (OK, now. Very sick! Yes, she is. Yes, she is.) | 272. Puts stethoscope on A's chest. Says, "Very bad," gravely. Whispers to to M. A whines as if uncomfortable. |
| M - D | 273. Hazle mmmmmm. (Make a noise like mmmmmm.) | 273. Both D and M listen through stethoscope. |
| D - M | 274. No, no. Este es mío. (This is mine.) | 274. D and M have near disagreement, probably over stethoscope. |
| D | 275. ¡Ya! (OK!) | 275. D leaves, walking out her door and humming. Looks at camera and soon starts another enactment. |

Example 4 is a good example of an unsuccessful initiation that precedes negotiation. Mari wins this one since Diana finally agrees to play grandmother (abuelita). Adelita's successful initiation at 116 begins the brief enactment of "feeding grandmother."

EXAMPLE 4: Unsuccessful strategy, "start playing," followed at 116 by successful strategy, "start playing":

A = Adelita
D = Diana
M = Mari

| Speaker Addressee | Transcription and translation | Commentary |
|---|---|---|
| M to D | 112. Caldito? (Soup?) | |
| D to M | 113. No, yo me sirvo sola...<br>(No, I'll serve myself, thank you)<br>Uds. no me podían servir porque yo era doctora...(No, you all couldn't serve me because I was the doctor)<br>Adelita, yo te (inaudible) mi abuelita, quieres ser mi abuelita?<br>(Adelita, I..you.....my grandma..do you want to be my grandma?) | 113. Serves herself soup as she continues talking to M and A. |
| M to D | 114. Y si tú eres mi abuelita..eres my abuelita..<br>(And if you are my grandma...you are my grandma..) | 114. Continues eating from the plate as she talks to D, who is arguing with her as to who will be the grandma... |
| D to M | 115. Yo no soy tu abuelita...<br>(I'm not your grandmother) | |
| A to D | 116. Aquí está el café...<br>(Here's the coffee) | 116. Brings D a cup of coffee and places it on the table. |
| D to M | 117. Sí soy la abuelita..dije..soy su abuelita.<br>(Yes, I'm the grandmother...I'm your grandma.) | 117. Turns her head to talk to M directly |
| A to D | 118. Pon La aquí pa'que no se le tire...<br>(Put it here so that it won't spill...) | |
| D to A | 119. Aquí y ya niña... (Here and that's that little girl) | 119. Bangs a utensil and raises her voice at A, the granddaughter at this point. |
| D to M | 120. (Inaudible) | |
| M to D | 121. Tenga su caldito...<br>(Here's your soup...) | 121. Walks over to D to serve her more soup; D refuses to take anymore |

(cont.)

| Speaker/ Addressee | Transcription and translation | Commentary |
|---|---|---|
| D to M | 122. Ya, ya le eché caldo... Ya tiene carne... no yo no quiero nada de caldo..no, no... (I already poured some soup...it's got meat... I don't want any soup...no, no...) | 122. Motions to M that she doesn't want any more soup and makes her take it away; raises her voice to a louder tone to emphasize her determination/ refusal.. |
| M to A | 123. Si no tiene....(inaudible) ahí tiene hija... (If it doesn't have.... there's some there daughter...) | 123. Walks over to the stove area and then over to the dresser area to brush her hair |
| M to D | 124. 'Buelita...aquí cuida, cuida...voy a ir ah (Grandma...will you take care, take care I'm gonna go...to ah..) | 124. Now starts brushing A's hair as she talks to D, who is still seated at the table. |
| D to M | 125. Cállese, Ud... (You be quiet!) Quiero café. (I want some coffee) | 125. Demands coffee in a loud tone of voice. |
| M to D | 126. No hay café ni nada... (There isn't coffee or anything...) | 126. Answers D in the same none of voice rather abruptly and definitively. |
| D to M | 127. Ya me voy!..(I'm leaving!) | |
| M to D | 128. Váyase! (Leave then!) | 128. Retorts to D's comment in a rather disinterested tone of voice as she continues brushing A's hair. |
| D to M | 129. Bye... | |

Example 4 is also illustrative of the fluidity of these children's play. The assignment of roles always seemed tenuous; at any second they could change, as they did between turns 112 and 117. The possible effect of this fluidity on the enactment of scripts; whether the strategies, negotiations, and enactments are related to children's organization of social knowledge; and how their discourse compares with that of children studied by other investigators are discussed next.

## DISCUSSION

The broad purpose of this study was to learn how the children's knowledge of the social world was organized in the discourse of their dramatic play. Because of the small number of scripts (14) in the corpus analyzed, I conclude that the knowledge their discourse revealed was not expressed in script-like form. The fluidity of both themes and roles in their play probably accounts for the lack of many scripts. This fluidity is not surprising in at least one respect. Dramatic or fantasy play is by nature fulid; in play children are in general free to be and do what they want. Roles and scenes shift often. Once two or more children are involved, however, the relationships among the children may constrain or add to the fluidity of play. The children in Group I, particularly Mari and Diana, were in a continuing conflict to see who would regulate the play. The effects of conflict seemed to be an unsuccessful enactment, a new negotiation or interruption by a child who wanted to reassign roles or change activities, or a termination of enactment because a child refused to play an assigned role. The negotiations and terminations led to truncated enactments, which were unlikely to meet the definition of a script.

The general strategies that the children used to negotiate roles and/or

initiate enactments showed that the three focal children were able to use language to regulate and manipulate others' behavior. The more successful of the two strategies was "start playing." This was also the less subtle and less democratic strategy. Talking about who was to play or do what, "play by regulation," was proportionately less successful. Perhaps this means that these children were already aware that acting is more effective than negotiating or consulting to get what one wants. The most coherent enactments, in fact, were those that Diana initiated by starting to play (by saying "Ding dong!" or "Waitress!").

The children's own agendas and desire for controlling the direction of play clearly affected the way discourse was organized. This organization was seldom script-like, so that little was learned about these children's scriptal knowledge. This does not imply that the children lacked scripts. They may organize their social knowledge according to scripts but not have manifested this knowledge in the discourse of their play. The work of Nelson and her collaborators (Nelson, 1978; Fivush, 1982) suggests that a fruitful way of tapping scriptal knowledge may be through interviews, and not by analysis of spontaneous talk. In the present study the elements of many common scripts were present, and in some cases the elements were arranged in the temporal sequence typical of the routine enacted. The children's discourse revealed not the cognitive organization of their social knowledge, but aspects of their social knowledge, some of their social agendas, and general strategies for accomplishing them. A major aspect of that social knowledge was these children's conceptions of dominance in relationships. In their play mother, doctor, and teacher were unsurprisingly the

dominant, often coveted roles.

The data also reflected children's abilities to jointly structure play situations according to the setting and individual actors. In addition, all three criteria that Garvey (1974) states characterize children's play--distinction between play and reality, abstraction of interactive rules embedded in play, and joint construction of a shared image of the play episode--were present in the children's discourse. Diana and Mari (example 2) talked about the roles they played, demonstrating that they knew this was play. Further, both girls used paralinguistic cues, such as increased amplitude and clearer enunciation, when they played doctor or mother.

All four children showed awareness of general rules of interaction. There was turn-taking; explicit suggestion that the person who visits another provides a reason for her presence (example 2); acquiescent, nonverbal behavior on the part of the "baby" (example 3) when reacting to mother and doctor; accomplishment of doctor's job when Diana diagnosed Adelita as "bien mala" (very sick).

Another general feature of discourse that Diana and Mari manipulated often was terms of address: señorita, hija, mi hija (my daughter), a term of endearment. These were socially appropriate and served to mark the roles played. A feature specific to Spanish was the use of usted (Vd. in text, you, formal register), as in examples 2 and 3. Children at this day care center seldom used the usted form, so that its use to highlight the first encounter between doctor and mother was notable.

As for the third criterion, jointly constructing a shared image of play, there may have been a shared image of a visiting doctor script, for example, but negotiation was necessary to see whether that image would be

enacted. The routine sequencing in the script seemed to be: 1) doctor announces self by ringing doorbell; 2) mother answers and greets doctor; 3) doctor examines patient; 4) doctor gives diagnosis. In example 2 this script was not enacted because Mari did not accept Diana's role assignments: Diana was to be doctor. Mari wanted Diana to be a baby sitter, and Diana refused to continue. Whthin a minute, Diana tried to enact her version of the script again, this time with greater success. Her script became somewhat more elaborate. Mari was again required to follow Diana's directions and for the most part did so. Toward the end of the episode, Mari inserted her own elaborations: kisses can cure an ailment, and "mmmmmm" is an appropriate noise for adults to make around sick children.

In this case, the children have jointly constructed a script not as a venture among equals, but because Mari complied with Diana's image of the script. Adelita was docile in the child's role and so was cooperative in enactment. This example is atypical of the data in that it is script-like, but typical in its highlighting of regulation through discourse. Controlling peers' behavior and asserting one's own importance was also important to children in other recent studies (Cook-Gumperz, 1981; Genishi & Di Paolo, 1982; Schwartzman, 1978). Schwartzman, for example, found that children in the day care center she studied were very concerned with control and manipulation, and their concerns were reflected in their play. Other investigators (Corsaro, n.d.; Garvey, 1974) have presented data that show less conflict and more reciprocity. Whether or not the discourse of play highlights conflict and control, these studies and the present one, demonstrate that talk is a tool for accomplishing social activities. In this study, how those activities unfold during play seems to depend on the success of individual children's discourse strategies.

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Table 1

Frequency of Children's Unsuccessful and Successful Strategies for Initiating Enactments

| Session | Length in Minutes | Strategy | Child | | | | | | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Mari | | Diana | | Adelita | | Lili | | |
| | | | U[a] | S[b] | U | S | U | S | U | S | |
| A | 40 | Start Playing | 6 | 5 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 4 | - | - | 20 |
| | | Play by Regulation | 3 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | - | - | 9 |
| B | 20 | Start Playing | 1 | 6 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | - | - | 13 |
| | | Play by Regulation | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | - | - | 4 |
| C | 25 | Start Playing | 1 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | - | - | 9 |
| | | Play by Regulation | 5 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 2 | - | - | 18 |
| D | 35 | Start Playing | 2 | 2 | [c]- | - | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 8 |
| | | Play by Regulation | 6 | 3 | - | - | 1 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 14 |
| | | | 25 (n=52) | 27 | 10 (n=26) | 16 | 4 (n=15) | 11 | 0 (n=2) | 2 | 95 |

[a]U = Unsuccessful

[b]S = Successful

[c] = Not present for this session

Table 2

Summary across Sessions of Frequency of Children's Unsuccessful and Successful Strategies for Initiating Enactments

| Strategy | Child | | | | | | | | Total | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mari | | Diana | | Adelita | | Lili | | | |
| | U[a] | S[b] | U | S | U | S | U | S | U | S |
| Start Playing | 10 | 18 | 3 | 9 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 16 | 34 |
| Play by Regulation | 15 | 9 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 5 | 0 | 1 | 23 | 22 |
| | 25 | 27 | 10 | 16 | 4 | 11 | 0 | 2 | 39 | 56 |

N = 95

[a]U = Unsuccessful

[b]S = Successful